

To receive a report on Victoria Gardens and the Maurice Huggins Room and consider any actions and associated expenditure

Report to: Full Town Council

Date of Report: 05.03.26

Officer Writing the Report: Town Clerk / RFO

Pursuant to:

Devolution Sub Committee held 30.01.25 minute 27/24/25

Full Town Council held 06.02.25 minute 336/24/25

Devolution Sub Committee held 28.08.25 minute 25/24/25

Purpose of the report:

To provide Members with updated findings regarding the maintenance of Victoria Gardens and the future use of the Maurice Huggins Room.

Officer's Recommendations

Members are asked to note the report and consider whether the following represents the preferred way for Saltash Town Council to proceed:

1. Cease progressing the lease for both Victoria Gardens and the Maurice Huggins Room.
2. Contribute to maintenance and improvements at Victoria Gardens, without assuming full liability, by:
 - Restoring the railings
 - Introducing sponsored benches
 - Supporting the Friends of Victoria Gardens in continuing their valuable work
3. Work collaboratively with Cornwall Council to enhance the site (outlined in point 2 above), while avoiding the financial and legal responsibilities associated with a full asset transfer.

4. Acknowledge the difficulty in identifying a viable Town Council use for the Maurice Huggins Room that would not negatively affect existing local businesses.

Therefore, Saltash Town Council encourages Cornwall Council to first engage with the community to explore potential community-focused uses, as demand is more likely to come from community groups than commercial operators.

Report Summary

Saltash Town Council entered into negotiations with Cornwall Council regarding the potential devolution of Victoria Gardens and the Maurice Huggins Room. Following a prolonged process and consideration of several factors, the Devolution Sub Committee meeting held on 30 January 2025 recommended that Full Council refuse the draft lease.

Full Council, at its meeting on 6 February 2025, refused the Sub Committee's recommendation delegating to the Town Clerk to work with the relevant Cornwall Council officers to negotiate the lease and discuss the potential option for a devolution package.

Members agreed that improvements to the site remained important. At the Devolution Sub Committee held on 28 August 2025, it was resolved that the matter be discussed at the first internal Council Forum meeting.

At that Forum, the Town Clerk was tasked with engaging with the relevant Cornwall Council officers to explore whether Saltash Town Council could support the maintenance and enhancement of Victoria Gardens without assuming full liability. Potential actions identified included:

- Restoring the railings
- Introducing sponsored benches
- Supporting the Friends of Victoria Gardens to continue their valuable work

Members felt that this approach would allow the Town Council to work collaboratively with Cornwall Council to improve the site while avoiding the financial and legal responsibilities associated with a full asset transfer.

Cornwall Council responded positively, confirming that the Environment Team is open to a licence or planting agreement and/or periodic works arranged through Cormac. The most appropriate route for Friends of Victoria Gardens to engage is via the Cormac Volunteers Scheme.

At the January Council Forum meeting, Cornwall Council's proposal was welcomed by Members. Members also supported encouraging Cornwall Council to engage with the community in the first instance regarding potential use of the Maurice Huggins Room, as community need is likely to be greater than commercial demand.

Cornwall Council is now awaiting formal confirmation that Saltash Town Council does not wish to proceed with the lease for Victoria Gardens or the Maurice Huggins Room, but does wish to continue supporting maintenance work (outlined above) and to work in partnership with Friends of Victoria Gardens.

Members are asked to consider the officer's recommendation to progress on this basis.

How Does This Meet the Business Plan?

Supporting the maintenance and enhancement of Victoria Gardens aligns with several of the Town Council's strategic priorities, including:

- Promoting Saltash as a vibrant and welcoming visitor destination
- Supporting health and wellbeing
- Addressing the climate emergency
- Enhancing open and green spaces

Budgets

Budget Codes: 6588 EMF Victoria Gardens

Budget Availability: £14,481

Committed Spend: None.

Signature of Officer:

Town Clerk / RFO